

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0626

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIESTE 0085

E.O. : 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: RENEWAL AND THE VENETO DC

1. SUMMARY. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) VENETO ORGANIZATION RANKS AMONG THE MOST ROBUST OF ALL LOCAL DC GROUPS, WINNING 51 PCT OF THE VOTE IN THE 1976 CHAMBER ELECTIONS. IT IS STILL THE POWER TO BE RECKONED WITH HERE BUT THE COMMUNISTS ARE GAINING EVEN IN THIS DC STRONGHOLD. THE BASIC QUESTION SEEMS TO BE JUST HOW MUCH CAN A DC ANCHORED TO BEDROCK CATHOLIC TRADITIONALISM AND FUNDAMENTAL RURAL CONSERVATISM CHANGE IN ORDER TO DO THE NECESSARY IN THE FACE OF THE PRESENT CHALLENGE. BASED ON THE RESULTS OF FOUR RECENT VENETO DC PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES, THE ANSWER SEEMS TO BE LITTLE AND ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY. END SUMMARY.
2. THE DC STILL COMMANDS IN THE VENETO WHERE CATHOLIC TRADITIONA-

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LISM AND RURAL CONSERVATISM PREDOMINATE. IT IS LOSING THE VOTE, HOWEVER, IN THE LARGE AND NOT SO LARGE CITIES AND PARTICULARLY IN THE MESTRE INDUSTRIAL AREA, WHERE SUCH OLD FASHIONED VIRTUES ARE NOT THE MAJORITY VIEW. AS THE VENETO CONTINUES TO MOVE TOWARDS SOME SORT OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE RURAL AREAS DEPOPULATE, THE VENETO DC, LIKE IT OR NOT, IS BEING PUSHED INTO PLAYING A ROLE AS A MODERN URBAN LAY POLITICAL PARTY. THUS IN ORDER TO RETAIN ITS PREDOMINANT POSITION IN THE VENETO, THE DC MUST IN SOME WAY RECONCILE ITS MAJORITY CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC BACKING WITH THE POLITICAL EXIGENCIES OF A MORE URBAN, INDUSTRIALIZED VENETO.

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- MINANT POSITION IN THE VENETO, THE DC MUST IN SOME WAY RECONCILE ITS MAJORITY CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC BACKING WITH THE POLITICAL EXIGENCIES OF A MORE URBAN, INDUSTRIALIZED VENETO.
3. FACED WITH DECLINING SUPPORT NATIONALLY, THE DC LEADERSHIP LOOKS TO THE VENETO AS A BULWARK AGAINST FURTHER LOSSES. TO DO SO, REFORM AND RENEWAL ARE EVEN MORE IMPERATIVE HERE THAN IN ROME. AS FOR REFORM, POWERFUL VENETO LEADERS GUI AND RUMOR ARE TAINTED WITH

LOCKHEED. WITH REGARD TO RENEWAL, THE SO-CALLED (INIZIATIVA POPO-LARA) WAS TO BE THE BASIS OF A UNIFIED PARTY. IN FACT, IT WON THE MAJORITY IN THE RECENT PROVINCIAL DC CONGRESSES IN PADOVA, ROVIGO, TREVISO, AND VICENZA. MORE OF THE SAME IS EXPECTED IN THE REMINING CONGRESSES IN BELLUNO, VENICE, AND VERONA SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE SOON.

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4. NATALE GOTTARDO, NEWLY ELECTED DC DEPUTY FROM PADOVA, RECENTLY TOLD PRINCIPAL OFFICER (INIZIATIVA POPOLARE) INITIALLY HAD HIS FULL SUPPORT AND THAT THE OTHER FOUR LIKE-MINDED NEW DC PADOVA DEPUTIES. THEIR GOAL WAS TO USE IT TO BREAK DOWN THE OLD CORRENTI AND CREATE A NEW PARTY RESPONSIVE TO MODERN NEEDS AND ABOVE ALL CAPABLE OF DEALING IN A RATIONAL MANNER WITH ITALY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

5. NEEDLESS TO SAY GOTTARDO WAS DEEPLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE OUTCOME IN THAT HIS FOUR COLLEAGUES MADE THEIR PEACE WITH THE PARTY AND JOINED

THE ESTABLISHED CORRENTI. ALSO, THE (INIZIATIVA POPOLARE) NO LONGER HAS ANY INDEPENDENT STATUS SINCE IT HAS BEEN CO-OPTED BY THE SYSTEM AND IS NOW AN UMBRELLA UNITY FRONT FOR THE POWERFUL VENETO DOROTEL, FANFANI, AND IN SOME CASES BASE GROUPS. FINALLY, ANGELO FOLETTO WAS ELECTED MARCH 23, AS VENETO REGIONAL SECRETARY OVER THE PROTESTS OF THE MINORITY WING. HANDPICKED BY HIS PREDECESSOR, FOLETTO LIKE CORDER IS A MEMBER OF THE FANFANI GROUP. AS FOR GOTTARDO, IT HAS BEEN A SOBERING EXPERIENCE IN HIS FIRST TIME OUT AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED INTERESTS.

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6. COMMENT. IN THE VENETO AT LEAST, THE DC CORRENTI ARE ALIVE, WELL AND SHOW NO SIGNS OF LOSING THEIR VITALITY. IN MANY RESPECTS, THE

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CORRENTI ARE THE VERY STRENGTH AS WELL AS THE WEAKNESS OF THE LOCAL DC.

THEY REPRESENT WELL DEFINED, POWERFUL, ENTRENCHED INTERESTS WHICH ARE THE BACKBONE OF THE PARTY. TO TRY AND ELIMINATE THEM, MEANS TO CHANGE THE VERY NATURE OF THE PARTY- SOMETHING THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP IS CLEARLY LOATHE TO DO OR EVEN EXPERIMENT WITH. THEY HAVE NO WISH TO SACRIFICE PRESENT SOLID BACKING FOR DEBATABLE GAINS ELSEWHERE. AS THINGS NOW STAND THEREFORE, PROFOUND CHANGE IN THE VENETO DC IS NOT LIKELY IN THE NEAR TERM. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE SOME GENTLE NUDGING OF THE PARTY BY MARINO CORDER AND THE OTHER CONSERVATIVE DC LEADERS TOWARDS A MORE LAY ORIENTATION IN AN EFFORT TO STEM LOSSES IN THE INDUSTRIAL AREA. MOEN.

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